Funds for minorities for Haj pilgrimage

1383. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria set up to fund the minorities for Haj pilgrimage;

(b) the preference being given to poor people under BPL categories in Andhra Pradesh; and

(c) the preference being given to children especially not only for Haj pilgrimage but also for Ajmer and other pilgrimages within the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) The Government do not fund the minorities for Haj pilgrimage except to the extent the subsidy being provided for their air travel for the pilgrimage.

(b) The selection of the pilgrims is done on random basis on the pattern of 'Computerized Qurrah'. As such, no preference is being given to the poor people under BPL categories in Andhra Pradesh or any other State.

(c) No preference is being given to children for Haj Pilgrimage.

Strengthening of ties with US

1384. SHRI SABIR ALI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government proposes to further strengthen its ties with the United States of America; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI PRENEET KAUR): (a) and (b) Yes. Government of India desires to strengthen and deepen relations with the United States of America in existing areas of bilateral cooperation such as defence and security, energy, space, education, economy and commerce, science and technology, health, people to people contracts among others, and to identify possible areas of collaboration in newer areas of cooperation to take bilateral ties to a higher level of engagement. It also seeks to intensify engagement with the USA on global issues of common concern such as climate change, disarmament, international terrorism and maritime security to strengthen Indo-US strategic partnership.

Steps to face Talibani terror

†1385. SHRI LALIT KISHORE CHATURVEDI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the steps being taken to maintain the law and order situation in India in the wake of increasing Talibani terror first in Afghanistan and then in Pakistan;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.